



**Oregon Youth Soccer Association  
Age Group Curriculum for Youth Player Development U10-14  
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**"The younger they are, the more organized the coach must be."  
Dr. Tom Fleck, USSF National Staff Instructor**

**KNOW THE PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH COACHING**

Decision-making is the key. Soccer is a game in which the players have to think! Let the players make some input into the session, by giving them some opportunities to make decisions within the games that you choose as a coach.

The coach makes the games and the rules simple. One should allow scheming but not cheating. Have a lot of balls around as a coach to make the play somewhat continuous for plenty of repetition.

**Principles of Youth Coaching**

**A COACH OF YOUTH SOCCER MUST ALWAYS BE POSITIVE!  
A COACH MUST ALWAYS CHECK THAT THE PLAYING AREA IS SAFE!**

- 1. Activities need to be developmentally appropriate – fun, agility**
- 2. Give clear instructions – Brevity, Clarity, Relevance provide good pictures – little talking**
- 3. Simple to Complex progression**
- 4. Opportunities for decision making – attack/defend scheming**
- 5. Use safe and appropriate spaces (ie. 20x30 yards)**
- 6. Provide plenty of implications for the game – very wide scope with young kids**

## **U10 Flux Phase (The Critical Transition Period)**

The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age level. Children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to being self-critical and develop the need for group and/or team games. The game itself should be central to all skills training. Eleven a side soccer is too sophisticated and complicated for young players – small sided games, which provide the right amount of pressure for the child's level of development, are more appropriate.

### **Coach**

Should be a sensitive Teacher, Patient, Enthusiastic, Imaginative, Ability to Demonstrate, Understanding of Technique, Preferably Young & Dynamic. Should hold either;

**License: State Youth Module Level 2, or**

**License: State Youth Module Level 3**

### **Technique**

Is still most important at this age. Repetition of technique in practice should be achieved through fun games and dynamic activities.

**Dribbling** – Use of ALL Surfaces, Basic Turns, Basic Moves to beat an Opponent, Speed Dribbling in Open Space

**Receiving** – Body Behind the Ball, Cushion Ball => Ground Balls All Surfaces of the Foot from Pass  
=> Air Balls from Self Service

**Shooting** – Proper Striking Technique (Open Body, Position of Plant Foot, Ankle Locked, Strike Ball with Laces, Follow-through); Hit Moving Ball

**Passing** – Proper Technique for Laces, Inside, Outside

**Heading** – Introduction – Build Confidence, Does Not Hurt, Hit Ball with Forehead (should begin by using a soft nerf-type ball)

### **Tactics**

Can slowly begin to explain Fundamental Tactical Concepts in 1v1, 2v1 and 2v2 situations

Players should still all play a variety of positions => Develop the Complete Player

Attacking 1v1

Support, Width, Depth => 3v1, Introduce team triangle shape

Defending 1v1

Goalside; Immediate Chase; Pressure to the Ball

### **Physical**

Use FUN exercises, All fitness should be done with a ball, coordination, agility

### **Psychological**

Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to foster a desire to play (Intrinsic Motivation). Have players demonstrate increased self-responsibility. Give partial responsibility for preparation, discipline. Players can initiate play themselves and learn through self discovery/self expression. Players will enjoy competition so all activities should have objectives/method of scoring. Players can work in groups – so initiate cooperative games and activities.

**The Game:** 6v6 to 8v8 including Goalkeepers (5-7 Field Players with a Goalkeeper)

The effect of the model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. This is a time of transition from self-centered to self-critical. Players of this age have a high arousal level in relation to the training of basic skills. **This is the “Golden Age of Learning” and the most important age for skill development.** Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by doing. This is also an appropriate time to introduce and teach basic principles of play. It is important to establish discipline from the beginning.

### Coach

Should be a sensitive Teacher, Patient, Enthusiastic, Possess Soccer Awareness, Ability to Demonstrate, Knowledge of the Key Factors of Basic skill; Give Encouragement, Preferably Young & Dynamic. Should hold either;

**License: State Youth Module Level 3, or**  
**License: State ‘E’ / ‘D’ or higher**

### Technique

Important to Establish a Good Strong Solid Base. Development of Individual Skills Under Pressure of Time, Space and an Opponent. Increase technical Speed

**Dribbling** - Encourage Risk Taking!!! Moves to Beat an Opponent; Keep Possession – Shielding/Spin Turns; Change of Speed and Direction

**Receiving** – Ground and Air Balls – All Surfaces from Partner on the Move

**Shooting** – Proper Striking Technique – Partner Serve from All Angles, Turns, Cut Backs, Volleys.

**Passing** – Proper Technique, Laces, Inside, Outside – Short and Long; Crossing

**Heading** – Self-Serve => Partner Serve – Jumping to Head, Turning the Ball; Partner Juggling

**Tackling** – Proper Technique

### Tactics:

‘Dawn of Tactical Awareness’ Concentrate on the Basic Principles of Play  
Play a Variety of Positions => Develop an Awareness/Complete Player  
Promote Attacking Soccer – Possibly Play 3-4-3...

***Individual*** => 1v1

**Attacking** Keep Possession; Encourage Risk Taking => Take Players on 1v1 in Proper Areas of the Field

**Defending** Proper Pressure (In Front and Behind); Immediate Chase

***Small Group*** => 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v3

**Attacking** Keep Possession-> Support; Combination Play => Wall Pass. Take Over, Over Lap, Double Pass

**Defending** Pressure/Cover; Making

**\*\* Do a Great Deal of Coaching/Teaching within 4v4 Games \*\***

**Physical:** All Fitness Work with the Ball, Flexibility – Static Stretching, Agility – Coordination on the Ball, Speed, Strength, Endurance.

**Psychological:** Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to Foster a Desire to Play (Intrinsic Motivation). Encourage Decision Making, Imagination/Creativity, Increase Demands, Discipline, Encourage to Watch High Level Soccer

**The Game:** 8v8 to 11v11

## COACHING POINTS

# TEACHING THE TECHNIQUES

## DRIBBLING

### Coaching Points

1. Manipulating the ball from side to side (Movement of the ball).
2. Moving the ball past opponents (Movement of the body).
  - a. Pure speed
  - b. Change of pace
  - c. Change of direction
3. Running with the ball a feet.
  - a. Ball comfortable at feet
  - b. Ball not too far ahead
4. Individual possession (shielding).
  - a. Body shape
  - b. Position of ball
  - c. Change of direction (transfer of ball)

## PASSING

### Coaching Points

1. Weight or Pace of Pass—The pass should be played with the right amount of weight to feet or into space so that the receiver is able to either control the ball easily or play the ball comfortably with one touch.
2. Accuracy—Naturally, it is important that all passes are accurate.
3. Time of the Pass—The player in possession of the ball should not pass the ball if the intended receiver is not in a position to receive it comfortably. A poorly timed pass could result in a loss of possession.
4. Time of the Run—The player making a run to receive a pass should ensure that the player in possession of the ball has the ball under good control and is ready to make the pass. Not only is a poorly timed run a waste of energy, but also it could result in a loss of possession.
5. Support—It is vital that the player in possession of the ball has immediate help from his teammates. The more options a player has to pass the ball, the easier it is for him to keep possession. (Angle & Distance)
6. Passing Angle—Is the receiver of the ball in a good position to receive the ball.

## RECEIVING

### Coaching Points

1. Make an early selection in method of control.
2. Get in line with the line of the flight of the ball.
3. Keep your eye on the ball.
  - a. Relax the controlling surface for certain methods of control.
  - b. Wedge the ball between the foot and the ground.
4. Receiving touch should be in preparation (away from pressure) to either pass, dribble or shoot.

## **HEADING**

### **Coaching Points in Attack**

1. The position of the feet and being light on the feet is very important in order to jump for the ball.
2. Get in line with the flight of the ball.
3. Keep your eye on the ball at all times.
4. Time the run and jump to head the ball at your highest point.
5. Use the forehead at all times to head the ball.
6. Direct the ball down toward the target—i. e. goal, teammate, path of teammate.

### **Coaching Points in Defense: In order of priority a defender is looking for**

1. Height
2. Distance—WITH POWER
3. Accuracy
4. Principles 1-5 in attack also apply to defenders. Principle 6 does not apply because defenders generally are looking to head the ball up and not down.

### **Coaching Points—in Midfield or Attack:**

1. Principles 1-3 in attack apply to deflection heading.
2. Run towards flight of ball and glance the ball off either side or the middle of the forehead, depending on which direction the ball is to be deflected.

## **SHOOTING/FINISHING**

### **Coaching Points**

1. The same principles apply to shooting as to the individual passing techniques of the above.
2. It is important that players look at the ball during the whole process of striking the ball.
3. Players should ensure that their ankles are tight (locked) as they are about to strike the ball.
4. Consideration should be given to placement versus power in certain situations in and around the penalty area.

## **CROSSING**

### **Coaching Points**

1. The same principles apply to crossing as to lofted, driven and bending balls.
2. It is important to emphasize the angle of approach to the ball.
3. Players should be aware of their body shape in relationship to the quality of the cross.

4. Consideration should be given to placement of the ball into the attacking spaces in and around the six yard box.

## **Planning your practice**

Your practice must always be FUN. If you are not enjoying yourself, then you can be sure that the players are not! Use the Coaches Checklist at the front of this manual after planning your practice. Remember your practice must go from simple to complex!

A coach must always be organized and have some idea of what the team needs to work on. Therefore sit down for 5-10 minutes the night before practice and plan your session out. Please find an appropriate blank practice planning sheet to copy and use at the end of this section. Sometimes you will have to tear them up and start again! You should plan to photocopy your best plans and sit with other coaches of similar age-groups from your club about 2 weeks into the season and share information. This is a valuable resource – use it!

There is also a whole series of FUN and appropriate activities at the end of this manual to add to the game activities that you observed during the clinic. Do not let your practices get boring and staid! Always better yourself and your knowledge by attending coaching clinics, watching other coaches and doing your own research from books, video and internet resources. Make it FUN and the players will come back next season to play again. That is your ultimate goal.

For U10-12 players, we recommend a game/activities approach to teaching. By asking your players questions, you will find out what level they are at. If we put them in situations in practice where they can figure things out for themselves, then they will retain that information a lot longer! See sample plan below.

As the players get a little older U12 and up, your practices often get more specific in nature, in order to correct or enhance an aspect of the game for your team. If you are going to concentrate on a specific technical or tactical topic, please see how your session should be planned using the different progression descriptions for technical and tactical based practices below. Times can be extended for older players.

For other ideas, please see the OYSA recommended texts;

***The Peak Performance: Soccer Games for Player Development, Dr. Ron Quinn***

***Soccer: How to Play the Game, US Soccer Federation***

## **Technical Progression Description (for U12 and up)**

### **Warm-Up;**

Time:	10-15 minutes, depending on age and ability level of players
Intensity:	Mild to medium
Space:	General to confined, depending on age and ability of players
# of Players:	1-3, small groups to promote repetition of the activity

This phase should begin with mild activity to introduce and/or reinforce the objective/skill of the training session. It should work towards execution of the objective/skill at game speed. Warm-up can occur in general space with little or no pressure and then move to confined space, which adds a form of pressure. Activities selected must allow for the basic execution of the skill, while moving. The players must be moving in order to prepare their bodies for the physical demands of the training. Stretching must be incorporated during the activities, and should include the major muscle groups that will be used during the session. The stretching should be static, **NO BOUNCING**. Warm-up also includes preparing the players mentally for the remainder of the activities.

### **Match Related;**

Time:	20-25 minutes
Intensity:	Medium to high
Space:	Defined according to the number of players and their ability level (smaller)
# of Players:	Small groups

This phase of the activity serves as the bridge between the warm-up and the full large group competition. Small group activities will help you to develop your skill objective by allowing frequent repetitions. The activity should have pressure from defenders and/or tighter spaces. Pressure needs to be added incrementally based upon the players level of success. The activities should be 'game like' but with smaller numbers of players.

### **Match Condition;**

Time:	30 minutes plus
Intensity:	High
Space:	Defined according to the number of players and their ability levels (larger)
# of Players:	Varies @ 7-11 per team

This phase of the practice should occupy the largest allocation of time. This is where the players get to perform the practiced skill in a game environment. The activity should have the same objective/skill as its main component, with restrictions added to increase the repetitions. Other components of a game such as the goals, a specific time limit, and a way for the players to determine success within the activity must be included. The session should always end with a game played with 2 (two) goals with no restrictions in order for the coach to evaluate if the objective/skill has been transferred to the game.

### **Warm-Down;**

Time:	5-10 minutes
Intensity:	Low
Space:	No specific boundaries
# of Players:	Individual to various group sizes

The warm-down serves to wind down the athletes mentally and physically. The activities should be performed in general space with low intensity. The activity selected should be consistent with the objective of the day. Stretching should be incorporated in this phase, emphasizing the muscle groups used during the session.

## **Tactical Progression Description (for U12 and up)**

### **Unrestricted/Warm-Up;**

Time:	10-15 minutes, depending on age and ability level of players
Intensity:	Moderate to high
Space:	Unrestricted
# of Players:	Small groups

This phase should begin with mild activity to introduce and/or reinforce a soccer decision. The activities should be performed in unrestricted space with little or no pressure. Activities selected must allow for basic decisions of the tactical objective, while the player is moving. This basic execution of decisions allows for early repetition before more complex situations are presented later in the session. The players must be moving in order to prepare their bodies for the physical demands of the training. Stretching must be incorporated during the activities, and should include the major muscle groups to be involved in the training. The stretching should be static, NO BOUNCING.

### **Restricted Space;**

Intensity:	Medium to high
Space:	Defined rectangular spaces
# of Players:	Small groups

This phase of practice serves to further define the decisions the player will make. The fact that the space is rectangular will give the activity a sense of direction. Defining where the sidelines are will help the players know where they are located within the playing space. The activity should have pressure from defenders and/or tighter spaces. Restrictions may be used to promote decision making.

### **One Goal;**

Intensity:	High
Space:	Defined use of one full sized goal
# of Players:	Varies, small groups to a team organization

In this phase the space is defined by sidelines and one full sized goal. This lets the players know in what third of the field they are operating. Combined with earlier information and larger numbers, the players now have many tactical cues to help them make correct decisions. The desired objective (attack/defense) should work in one direction with the other having no counter. After quality repetition has occurred the coach may progress to add some counter opportunity.

### **Two Goals;**

This phase of the tactical practice should occupy the largest allocation of time. This is where the players get to perform the tactical decisions in a game environment, and also where the coach gets to evaluate if the objective has transferred from training to the game. Adding a second goal completes the tactical progression. The second goal allows for transition from attack to defense and there is a consequence for player's decisions. This phase has all the components of the game and a way for the players to determine success. Restrictions may again be used to implement a style of play.

### **Warm-Down;**

The warm-down serves to wind down the athletes mentally and physically. The activities should be performed in general space with low intensity. The activity selected should be consistent with the objective of the day. Stretching should be incorporated in this phase, emphasizing the muscle groups used during the session.

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Coach Name:** \_\_\_\_\_



*(Activities should be developmentally appropriate.)*

<u><b>(WARM-UP)</b></u>	<u><b>ORGANIZATION</b></u>	<u><b>KEY COACHING POINTS</b></u>
<u><b>INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES</b></u>		
<u><b>SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES</b></u>		
<u><b>LARGE GROUP ACTIVITIES</b></u>		



Then play the above 'Star Wars' game with the taggers without a ball, but everyone else with a ball. Then make it more challenging by having the taggers only tag by touching a ball with their foot. Stop. Coach can introduce shielding with hands, then play again.

### **Shielding/Turning**

Introduce the concept of shielding the ball using hands first (younger players will comprehend this infinitely quicker as they are more dexterous with their hands than feet). Each player has a partner with one ball between them. (The coach should give a good picture to start so they do not go straight down and bang heads). One player tries to keep the ball away from coach. The only rules are that the ball has to remain on the ground and that you can only maneuver it with one hand at a time. If partner (coach) touches the ball with his/her hand possession changes! When the coach wins the ball, demonstrate that you don't have to run away, just simply place your body frame between the ball and the opponent. Secondly, tell players not to travel - can stay in one spot and still retain possession. Third, get shielder to keep hip pointing to partner. Fourth, play shielding game using feet. Fifth, give everyone a ball in the rectangle and if coach (without ball) approaches them they are to turn away to shield. Coach can introduce inside and outside of foot turns this way. Then go back to the running bases game again and see if players can now shield and keep ball during game. Coach can introduce another tagger!

If one player is struggling - the coach can play and bale him out (dribble into him accidentally)

### **Ball Wars!**

Everyone has a ball, dribbling in a fairly small grid. Each player can score a point by dribbling around and hitting their ball against somebody else's. This encourages both attacking and defensive play. It is guaranteed that the coach will be asked 'what happens if he kicked his ball against mine as I was kicking towards his?' Give both a point. Points don't matter. Challenge the individual to beat his/her own personal score each time.

### **Ball Tag!**

Then in a 20 x 30 yard grid introduce a 2 team competition, blues against orange 8v8. Blues start inside grid without a ball. Orange begin outside grid and then are timed to get a ball (from a pile just outside the grid) pass it among themselves and try to hit the blue players with the ball below the knee! If hit this time have to kneel down on one knee, but can knock balls away with other foot. Time it, then change teams.

### **Find your own space!**

All dribble in a reasonable size grid trying not to bump into each other. Again encourage players to use both left and right feet. Stop the players when a few are close to each other, then get them to stand with their arms out to the side and twist gently from the waist. If they can touch one another player, they are too close! Then guarantee them that the next time you stop them, they will all find their own space. As a coach, one must stand in an appropriate spot to see the whole field of play. He or she can wait until every player is in their own space before calling stop. This way show the coaches that they can stand in a position to see everybody and recognize certain situations in which to stop the players to make positive points.

### **Simple Body Fake**

All kids/players love to learn new tricks! Instructor can use their favorite trick or any Coerver move as long as they break it into very small steps. I prefer to teach tricks without the ball first!

Get all participants to stand 3 steps back from their ball to learn the foot positioning first before complicating things with the ball! Lift the left foot up, take a small diagonal step forward (to the left), bend the left knee and drop the left shoulder down. Then lift the right foot up and take a quick hop diagonally forward to the right. When the ball is involved, on the hop push the ball forward in the same direction with whichever part of the foot is comfortable, preferably the right hand side of the laces of the right shoe. Let them practice on their own for 30 seconds. Do not spend long on this exercise. Some players will understand the concept and this will begin to rub off on the players around. I have had a 3 year old do this fake at camp and remember it the next day!

### **Coerver feints/moves**

For the coaches who have not seen or heard of Wiel Coerver, he is an ex-professional player and coach from the Netherlands who introduced a program emphasizing 1 v 1 moves to beat an opponent. His videos and books break down each move and explain it in simple terms. They are available in the OYSA office library and are well worth a look! You will be amazed at what the under 8 player in Holland can do with the ball! Here are a couple of the moves explained

### **The Scissors**

Standing behind the ball, swing your left foot around the front of the ball from left to right, put toes on ground, bend the left knee, drop the left shoulder, then quickly move the right foot to the left side of the ball and push it forward diagonally to the right with the laces of the right shoe. Remember that the first 3 steps after a move have got to be at pace so the defender does not catch you! Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

### **The Roll-Over**

Standing behind the ball, roll the ball across the body (left to right) with the sole (cleats) of the right foot so ball is moving, then swing the right leg back around the front of the ball from left to right, bending right knee and dropping shoulder, then take ball away with the outside of the left foot. Again, remember that after the move, the player on the ball has got to get away quickly.

The great thing about these moves is that you can practice them inside on a rainy day, because you don't need a ball to quicken foot speed. Try faking the dog or cat out! Try to see the real thing 'live' at one of the OYSA Coaching Clinics.

**American Football** - Create a playing field of 15 x 30 yards, but make the last 5 yards of each end an end zone. A touch down is scored by keeping possession and creating an opportunity to dribble into the end zone. If this is done with the ball under control, then a touch down is scored.

## **PASSING**

### **Coaching points (Passing):**

Keep on toes all the time (be ready), look up and take 'snapshot', make decision who to pass to, then head down and keep eye on ball, ankle locked with toe up, swing leg in straight plane, follow through center of ball.

### **Coaching points (Receiving):**

Keep on toes all the time (be ready), get body behind line of ball, look up take 'snapshot', make decision where to turn when ball is controlled (away from pressure), then keep eye on ball, offer largest area of contact to ball, cushion ball by giving slightly on contact, trap towards the ground, push ball out to side 1/2- 1 yard (away from pressure) to enable to take in stride.

### **Keep-Away**

This is an excellent exercise for warming up. Instead of having players standing around in a line waiting to shoot at goal before a game, have them gently warm up playing 3 v 1, or 5 v 2 keep-away for 15-30 second intervals. This gives players a lot more touches on the ball and produces a good feel for the particular playing surface, while alternating aerobic and anaerobic exercise. When an opposing coach sees this happen, he knows that the other coach knows what he is doing and begins to worry!

### **Soccer Golf**

Place a number of cones around an area. Each player has a ball and tries to strike each cone in turn (varying distances) counting the number of kicks (strokes). The player taking the least strokes wins, rewarding accuracy.

## **Windows'95**

Place a number of windows around an area (2 cones close together). 2 players have to pass through the window to score a point. Only rule is not to pass through same window ***twice in a row!*** -The Coach must introduce passing and communication at this point.

Advance the game by using left foot pass only, outside of foot passes, or play in groups of three to four and introduce the wall pass (see combination below).

2 teams (5 blue, 5 orange). Have to pass through window (gate) to score a point. How many can you score in 30 seconds. If balls collide - deduct 1 point. Keep ball moving. If ball stops deduct 1 point.

Same game only partners cannot talk (verbally communicate)

Then play Blue v Orange with 3 balls.

Other restrictions include limiting touches, ball never stops, left foot passes, etc.

### **Death on the Nile!**

20 x 30 grid. 3 teams of 4 players, and 3 balls. Each get one minute in the middle. Count # of interceptions. Other 2 teams have to play the balls across the 'river' back and forth. Introduce calling for the ball, then passing to a teammate on same side to open 'channels'. Techniques being used include-, passing & receiving, chipping, defending etc. We have to challenge our players cognitively. Other changes can include- points for passes, keep ball moving, time limit to play ball.

### **Keeper's Nest**

One player (keeper) guards, but cannot touch the ball. The keeper may stand over the ball. The objective is for the other three players to get to the ball away from the keeper (using hands, feet or either), without being tagged and frozen by the keeper. The keeper's goal is to freeze the other three players. Once a player is frozen, he can remain frozen until all players are frozen, or until the ball is snatched away by the other players, or until the player counts to 10.

### **Keeper's Nest 3v1**

Place three cones in a triangle 10 yards apart. One player is inside the triangle as the keeper. The other three try to possess the ball and score goals by moving the keeper out of position and playing through the triangle. If the keeper intercepts the ball, the player who played the ball last becomes the new keeper.

### **3v3, 4v4 Passing & Moving**

Play in a grid 15x25 yards. Two teams of three/four playing with a ball each. All they are to do is to keep possession in the area without bumping into the other team. Coach should stress team shape (triangle/diamond) always to be in a position where you can see the ball i.e. be passed to! Introduce communication and the importance of looking around before receiving and passing! Receiver's first touch should be in the direction where they want to go next.

### **3v3 or 4v4 'American Football!'**

Play 4v4 but instead of making goals for the teams to score in, create an end zone at either end of the small field. A team can score a 'touch-down' (6 points) if they pass the ball to a teammate standing in the end zone. Think up any number of variations for an extra point! Then restrict a player waiting in the end zone to staying in there a maximum of three seconds and then has to get out similar to basketball.

Advance the game by not allowing any player to stand still in the end-zone, or then limit access to the zone to 3 seconds at a time for any player.

### **Chip Pass to Target**

Create three 10 x 10 yard adjacent grids, and three teams of 4 players. Place one team in each square. The team in the middle (team B) have to sit down in their grid, but can move about. The object is for team A to chip the ball to team C over the heads of team B. For team C to score a point,

the ball has to be brought down under control (remaining in the grid or at the coach's discretion). Team C then has '3 touches, one to control, one to lay off a short pass and one to chip the ball back to team A. Whichever team is the first to play the ball out of the playing area, or allows team B to make a contact, switches position into the middle.

## **COMBINATION/TRANSITION**

**Possession/Transition Game (4 v 2)** - Set up 2 adjacent squares of 15 x 15 yards and pick two teams of four players. Start with 4 v 2 in one of the squares, with the other 2 staying in the adjacent square. The 4 try to keep possession in their area. If one of the 2 wins the ball they play the ball into the adjacent square to their teammates and then join them in the square to keep possession. When the transition takes place, the nearest two opposing players also move across the center line to become the 2 trying to win the ball back from the 4. Play continues.

**Wall Pass (2 v 1)** - In a 20 x 15 yard grid play 2 v 0 to get the feel of a one-touch wall pass. Then add one defender into the grid, and make the offensive pair play 2 v 1 and produce a wall pass to beat the defender and score by stopping the ball on the end line under control. The players with the ball turn round and repeat the exercise, trying to score as many times as possible by utilizing the wall pass. Get player A with the ball to dribble at speed at the defender to start the move. Player B then must read the visual cue and create an appropriate angle to either side of the defender in order to allow the opportunity for the wall pass. As the players get better technically, and more accustomed to the players around them, the coach should point out further visual cues. For example, if Player A wants to play a wall pass to the left, then he may want to run to the right of the defender (as he faces him). This will not only open up space on that side by drawing the defender away, but it can also be read as a cue for a teammate to create an angle for a wall pass on that side. Add deception by having the initial pass made with the outside of the foot.

**Overlaps (2 v 1)** - In a similar vein, overlaps can be created down the flanks. In an open space, practice player A dribbling towards the middle of the grid, with player B making an overlap outside (into the space created) from behind the player with the ball. He must communicate that he has read the visual cue and is overlapping the player with the ball who cannot see him.

The coach makes the games and the rules simple. One should allow scheming but not cheating. Have a lot of balls around as a coach, so that you can shout 'ball's out' or 'get out of here' to make the play somewhat continuous for plenty of repetition.

## **FINISHING**

### **Get out of here**

Play "Get out of here" (works for 8-14 year olds) - Two teams in a line stand either side of the coach (standing on the half way line with all the balls). Name them team France and team Brazil Play 2v2 in a 15 x 20 area (or 3v3 in 20x30) grid to 2 yard goals, with the first 2 from each side coming out as soon as the coach puts a ball on the field. The coach is boss of the balls! Introduce penalty for encroaching! When a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the coach shouts 'Get out of here!' and the players have to go to the back of their line. As soon as the coach yells, he can put another ball on the field for the next two players from each team to play. The game is continuous till the coach has no balls left. He can then ask the players what they can do to rectify the situation... They will soon collect all the balls back!

### **4 goal open/close game 25 seconds (3 teams of 3)**

Then introduce four small goals, one each on the mid-lines of the grid described above. Have 3 teams of 3 players. Four goal game with gates. One team is assigned to be gatekeepers, one player standing in each goal and the coach goes in the fourth. They are to act as a gate, designed to close or open the goal (step to the side) when directed by the coach pointing. The other players (each

team with a ball) play to score on any open goal by passing through it. Then try game with only one ball on the field. Then develop to...

**Finish with 2 fields of 4v4, with a different method of scoring on each field.**

Field 1: Head to score.

Field 2: All 4 have to be in opponents half of field for their goal to count!

Option: Have to go around the back of goal and dribble/pass through cones the opposite way. *The Coach can use any number of different options!*

**Jurassic Park**

30 x 20 or 30 x 30 yard grid, with 6 mini goals around border. Start with 5 orange inside grid with 5 balls, blues are outside. On command they have to come in and steal the balls to score. When scored the ball is dead. Time how long it takes to kill all 5 balls. Swap roles.

### **Numbers Up**

Going to one goal. Add pressure - (i.e. 2v 1, v2). Provide target for defender if they win the ball. Looking to shoot as quickly as possible, by having body in correct position, showing good 1st touch when receiving ball. 1st touch should be away from pressure. Disguise your shots.

### **Quick Fire!**

Pull one goal all the way up the field to the outer edge of the 18 yard box. Play 5v2 in an area 18x36 yards with two full size goals 18 yards apart. Play for 1 minute at a time, with the 5 having to make 5 passes before shooting. If the defenders steal the ball they go for goal also. You can add goalkeepers at any time.

### **Cooler Ball!**

Can play 4v4v4. Put large cooler / trash can (or similar) in middle of field and have 1 ball and the three teams play against each other! To score a team simply has to hit the target. Kids will play this game forever!

### **Triangular Goals**

Create Triangular goals (3 flags 2 yards apart in a triangle shape) in the middle of the penalty area. Play 4v4 in penalty box. One team has 4 attackers, the other 3 keepers and 1 defender. If ball goes out of box, or keepers/defender makes a save, switch. Let each team captain keep scores.

Then go to larger area - 6v6 or 8v8 in between halfway line and edge of 18 yard box. Open goals up to 6 yards wide.

Advance the activity appropriately by asking players to play 3 passes before shooting or chip over goals to teammate! Have to score with a volley or half volley, etc.

### **"The Game" 8v8, 9v9 to goals with one ball!**

A coach should always try to let the players scrimmage for a third or so of practice in the format that they will play in season. For the U10-12 age group this will be any number from 8v8 to 1 v 1.

### **Objectives of soccer activities**

- 1. Get players to solve problems*
- 2. Foster cooperation and teamwork*
- 3. When does the coach control the game as opposed to the players?*
- 4. Use games that bring out an aspect of the real game*
- 5. Excitement - get kids 'juiced up!'*
- 6. Create environments to bring ideas out. Show kids how to survive!*

## **Model Practice to Encourage Defensive Play Appropriate for U10-U12 Players**

### **Warm Up**

For these exercises, **PLEASE ENSURE** each player has shinguards on! Give all players a ball. Get players to dribble in a 20 x 15 yard grid. The grid can also be made larger depending on the ability of the players. On command 'CHANGE' players have to leave their own ball and find another to continue dribbling. This gets kids to be aware of what is going on around them.

Various stretches- Stretch hamstring and calf muscles. Dribble again. Stretch calf and Achilles tendon. Get a partner to put pressure on the ball with the ball of the foot, with their heel on the ground. Dribble again. Lift inside of foot to groin to stretch the glutemous maximus (butt!)

Play 6 v 1 with 6 balls. Player without a ball has to try and steal one. Players stay within the grid. After 1 minute or so, the player without the ball gets a quick exercise. Then take one more ball out so it is 5 v 2 with 5 balls. At end of a minute, 2 players will be without a ball and get an exercise.

Then take one more ball out so it is 4v3 with 4 balls. At end of a minute, 3 players will be without a ball and get an exercise. This helps players to dribble keeping their the ball within the frame of their body, and to hold off an opponent.

**In this period there has been no official instruction on how to defend the ball!**

### **Fundamental - Tackling**






Coach may want to introduce the block tackle at this point, for timing, rhythm etc. Coaching points include-. Low center of balance, knees bent. May want to start with players with a hand on their partner's shoulder. Develop rhythm, 3, 2, 1 go. Then develop to take a step **in**.

**Restricted Tackling** - In a rectangle of 15 x 25 yards, play 4 v 4 and create a small goal on each end line. Number each team 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each number can only tackle his opposing number. This allows plenty of, chances to dribble, as rarely are similar numbers close to each other, at least at the beginning!

### **Match Related**

In same 20 x 15 grid area, play 1 v 1 to small goals (same as 'Get out of here' game above). The Coach has the supply of balls on the mid-line and plays the ball in. Let players go through once each without any instruction.

Then introduce the Coaching points:

-  Curve defensive run to get between ball and goal (so they can't shoot on empty net!)
-  Defender must pressure ball quickly, but then 2 - 3 yards away slow down and get under control.
-  Get correct stance, (one foot in front of other) not square like basketball! Tell kids why!
-  Do not have to win ball, just keep between the attacker, ball and goal - block shot on goal.
-  If defender manages to turn the attacker, get in tight & don't let turn and face you again!

Award goals if not quick enough pressure on the ball. Then demonstrate how easy it is for the attacker to turn the defender if too tight. Get distances correct with regard to the speed of the opponent. First of all passive defending. Then let the defender tackle. If they win the ball, go for opponent's goal. Teams keep scores. Play for five minutes or so. Coach defender in the game. Ask other players to keep concentrating on what the on-field defender is doing well and doing poorly. This way they have the opportunity to learn from each other. Disallow goals if rest of team are not paying attention to what is going on the field.

Once concepts have been determined, introduce 2 v 2. Coach the defensive shape and concept of keeping 2 players at angle goal-side to support. Let the first defender know that the way he/she approaches the ball will determine what position the second defender takes up. There is no offside! If attackers run goal-side of the last defender award a goal. The supporting defender must have both opponents in front of him at all times.

**Match Conditions (no restrictions)**

Then develop to play 4v4 to targets in a 20 x 30 yard grid. Have to score by chipping the ball into a semi-circular end zone. Then play 4v4 on field with both teams also having a goalkeeper. In this stage it is best to let the game flow and not stop it every time a mistake occurs. A coach can call out what to do next time as the game continues!

**Summary**

Work defending session once every 3-4 practices at the age groups U-10 through U-14.

**Mike Smith**  
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**Please view our website at [www.oregonyouthsoccer.org](http://www.oregonyouthsoccer.org) for other good coaching information!**

**Top 10 List**  
**Reasons for Dropping out of soccer**  
**(Ranked according to mean importance)**  
***10-14 year olds, School & Non-school Soccer***

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**Boys**

- 1 I was no longer interested
- 2 It was no longer fun
- 3 I was tired of playing and practicing
- 4 Soccer conflicted with other sports I wanted to play
- 5 Practices and games were boring
- 6 My coach was a poor teacher
- 7 I wanted to participate in other non-sport activities
- 8 Coach only played his/her favorites
- 9 I did not like the coach
- 10 Too much emphasis was placed on winning

**Girls**

1. I was no longer interested
2. It was no longer fun
3. I wanted to participate in other non-sport activities
4. Soccer conflicted with other sports I wanted to play
5. I was tired of playing and practicing
6. Soccer required too much time
7. Practices and games were boring
8. My coach was a poor teacher
9. There was too much pressure
10. I never felt I belonged to the team

**This is why we as coaches must work on developing players:  
Make it fun and don't care too much about winning and losing!  
The greatest coaching achievement is to see players get better over the season**

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